

School Counseling Practices Survey Spring 2021

Review of Findings: A Conversation with Counselors
Hosted by the Vermont Agency of Education and the Regional Educational
Laboratory Northeast and Islands

Survey Context and Background

Survey objectives

To provide the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) with information that would help the agency to:

- prioritize policies and activities that improve the landscape for school counseling in the state;
- help counselors more fully connect students' personalized learning plans with flexible pathway options;
- promote best practices in counseling in alignment with American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards; and
- assess the needs of counselors and students related to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to target supports effectively.

Sample

Target population

- All elementary and secondary school counselors currently employed in Vermont
- Includes counselors serving students in technical centers and independent schools

Response rate

- 176 valid responses, which represents:
 - 25% of 715 individuals holding a school counseling license
 - 39% of 452 school counselors identified through a 2020 school website scan as currently serving in a school counseling position
 - Responding counselors had similar characteristics to the population of licensed counselors on record

Survey implementation

- Survey platform:
 - AOE hosted the survey on the Cognito Forms platform
- Survey link distribution:
 - AOE emails to individual counselor emails identified on school websites
 - Vermont School Counselor Association (VSCA) messages to membership
 - AOE request to school administrators to distribute to appropriate staff
- Survey dates:
 - February 10-26, 2021

Survey respondents had similar characteristics to licensed school counselors on the state's roster.

| Characteristics | Survey Respondents | State-level Data |
|---|--------------------|------------------|
| Total number of licensed counselors (active and inactive) | 176 | 715 |
| By type of counseling license | | |
| School counselors | 96% | 99% |
| CTE school counseling coordinators | 7% | 5% |
| By years of experience | | |
| Up to 5 years | 29% | 38% |
| 5–9 years | 19% | 24% |
| More than 10 years | 52% | 40% |
| By school type | | |
| Public school | 98% | 98% |
| Others | 2% | 2% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 2% | 1% |

Note: None of the differences above between proportions in the two groups were statistically significant based on a chi-square level.

Grade levels served

| | Frequency | Percentage (n=176) |
|--|-----------|--------------------|
| Elementary grades | 60 | 34% |
| Secondary level grades | 138 | 78% |
| -- Middle grades | 61 | 35% |
| -- High school grades | 85 | 48% |
| -- Students in technical center programs | 22 | 13% |

Counselors could select more than one level. Ten percent of respondents served K-8; one percent served K-12.

Caseload across all schools served

| | Total | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1–50 students | 6 | 3% |
| 51–100 students | 123 | 70% |
| 101–250 students | 21 | 12% |
| 251–325 | 14 | 8% |
| 325 or more | 12 | 7% |
| Total | 176 | 100% |

Key Findings

Secondary school counselors reported spending less time on the postsecondary planning component of their jobs as social/personal student needs and school support activities required an increasing share of time during COVID.

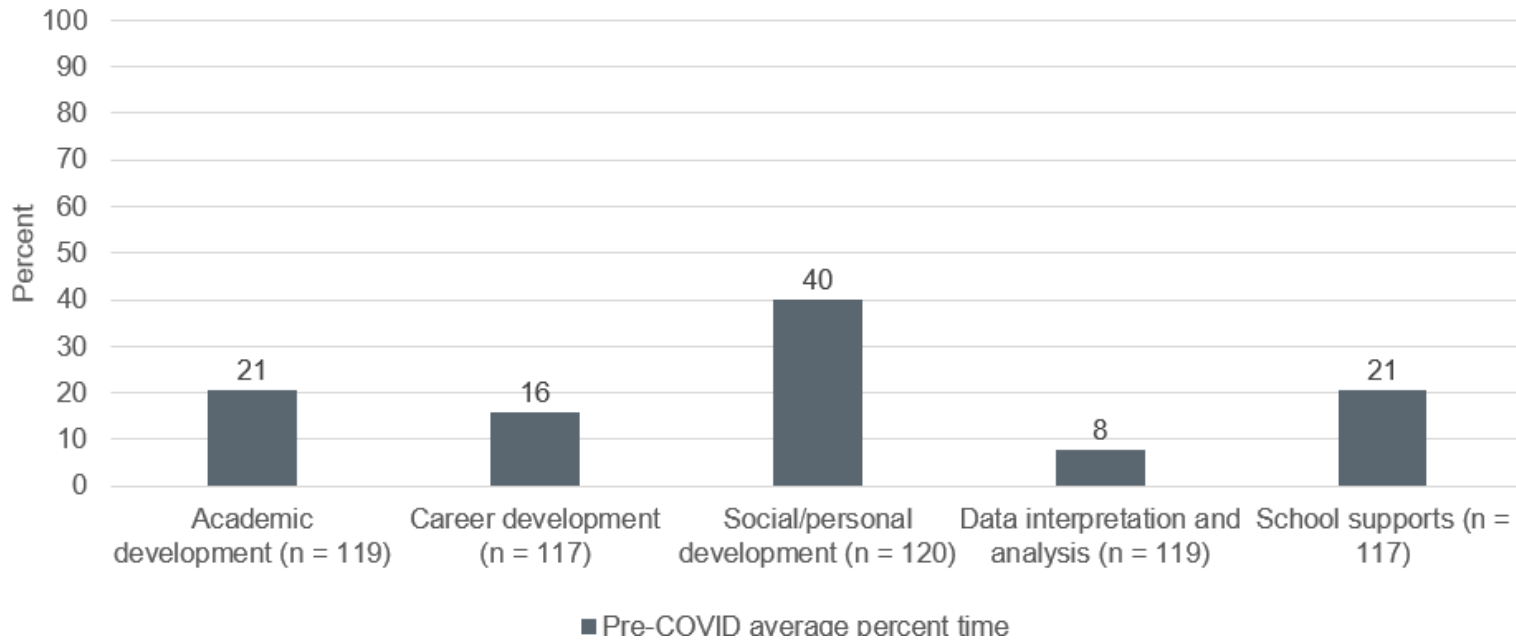
Counselors said they would like more clarity and training on standards and the counselor's role.

Time on tasks before and during the pandemic

Counselors said they had several non-counseling responsibilities *before* the pandemic

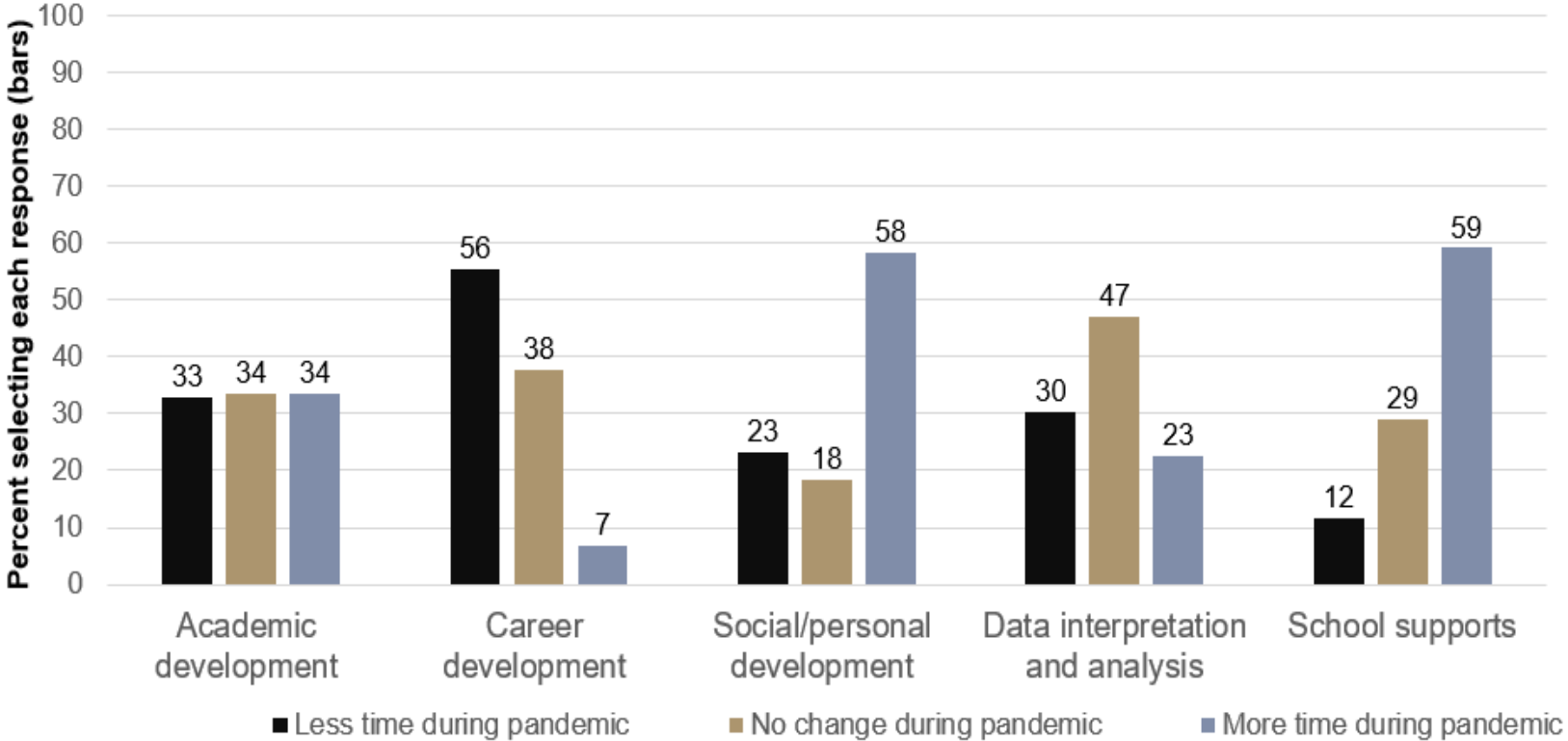
- The most commonly-cited activities were core counseling functions: education support team (82 percent) and individually-based advising (62 percent)
- However, many counselors were also assigned to school support activities:
 - testing coordination: 53 percent
 - lunch duty: 38 percent
 - serving as remote site coordinator, substitute back-up teacher or anti-bullying coordinator: 30-40 percent each

Career development was already an activity with one of the lowest time allocations *pre-pandemic*; more than half of secondary-level counselors said they spent even less time on it *during* the pandemic. (1)



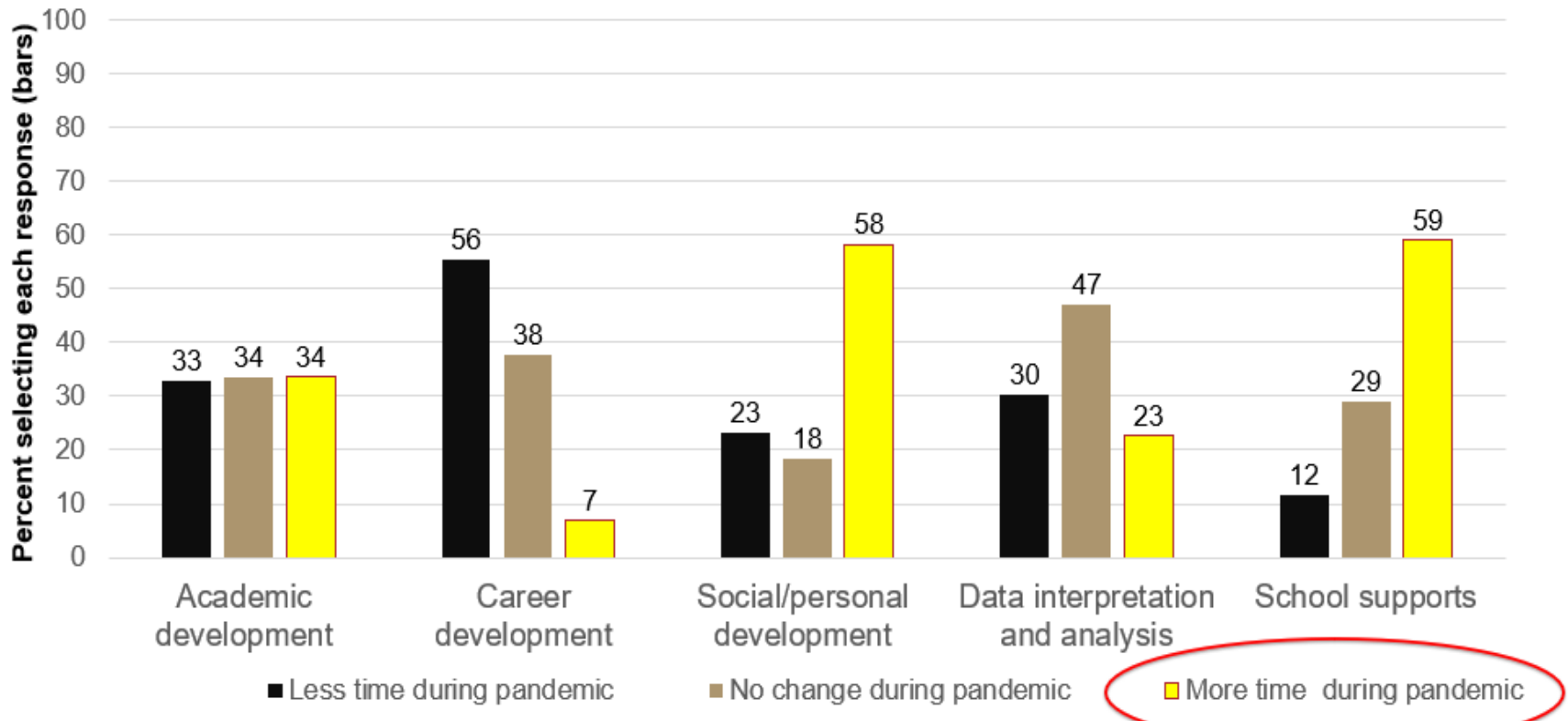
Note: N+ 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels

During the pandemic, secondary-level counselors said they spent additional time on social/personal development and school support activities (2).



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Key Findings

Most secondary school counselors said they knew where to refer students for social support services (75+%), while two-thirds knew where to go for job or internship placements (65%).

Only about one third of secondary school counselors reported discussing the local job market and regional employers with students.

Some counselors wanted more tools for identifying job opportunities and accessing labor market information.

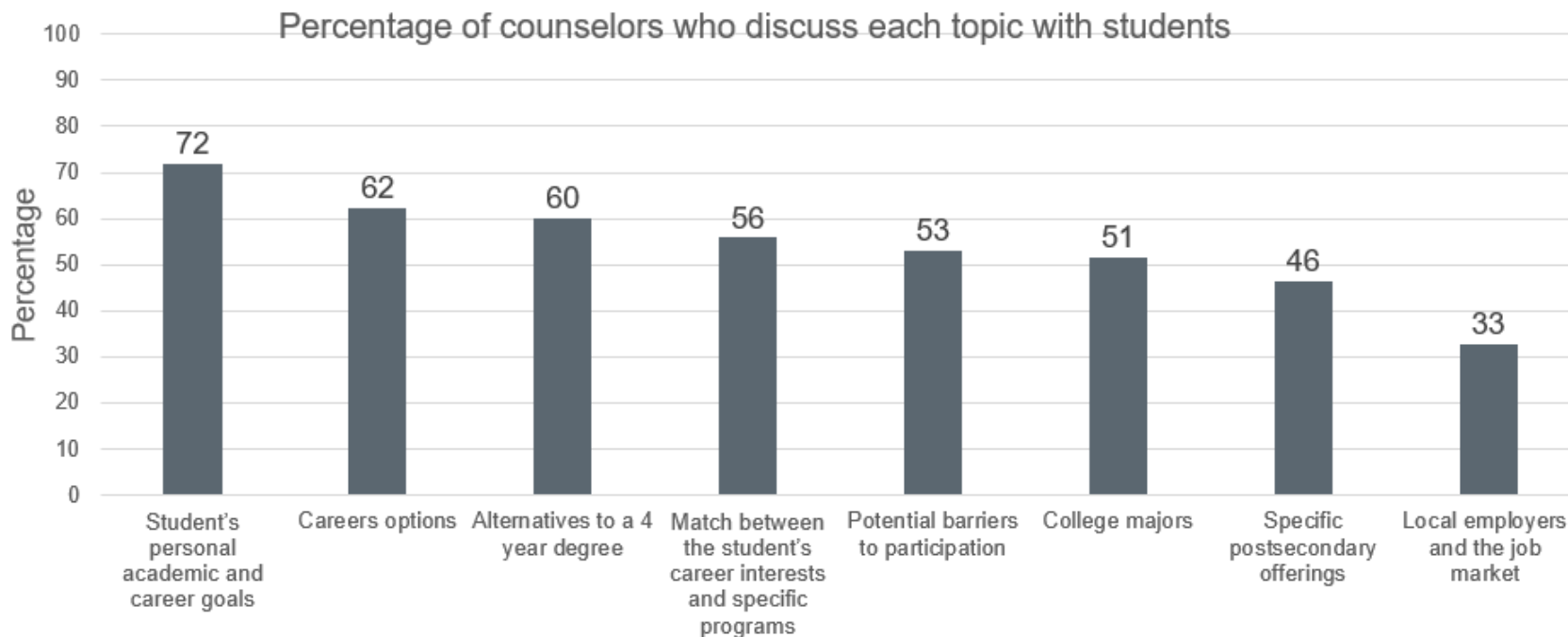
When a student has needs in the following areas, do you know of local resources to which you can refer them for help?

| Secondary school counselors | Yes | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| | N | % |
| Academic tutoring | 110 | 79.71 |
| Job or internship placement | 89 | 64.96 |
| Mentoring | 89 | 64.96 |
| Physical health | 130 | 94.20 |
| Housing | 109 | 78.99 |
| Food security | 129 | 93.48 |

In open-ended responses, some counselors requested additional tools or websites where they could identify, and connect students with, local support services.

Note: N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels. Respondents could select more than one option

Only about one third of counselors discussed the local job market and employers with students in the context of flexible pathways discussions.



Note: N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels. Respondents could select more than one option.

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